

# Spindle City Historic Society

Volume 8 Issue 4

Winter 2005

## DID YOU KNOW

...that three Albany County communities claim to have been the northernmost settlement reached by Henry Hudson in his 1609 voyage up the river? Albany, Bethlehem, and Cohoes all contend they were the terminus of Hudson's journey.

...that Pleasant Street in Cohoes was known as Pleasantdale Heights in 1916?

...that Fishman's 5 and 10 cent store opened on November 22, 1946? The long-neglected building at 103 Remsen Street that once housed Fishman's is now at risk.

...that in 1898, the Blue Line Car #192 of the Troy City Railway Co. was carrying about 40 Cohoes passengers returning home from a Labor Day picnic at Rensselaer Park when it was struck by a train at the railroad crossing on the west end of the Cohoes-Lansingburgh (112<sup>th</sup> St.) bridge? Fourteen lives were lost and many others were injured.

...that in 1878, David Conway and John Conway were locktenders for Erie Canal Locks 14 and 18, respectively?

...that in 1929, the Cohoes Historical Society officers included Albert C. O'Dell - president, Karl Ohman - vice president, Edgar B. Nichols - treasurer, and Hugh P. Graham - secretary?

...that the Cavaliers Riding Club sponsored a horse show and field day on September 28, 1953? The event was held at O'Rourke's Riding Stable on Columbia Street, on the site that was later the Cohoes Hospital and is now the Eddy nursing home and rehabilitation center.

...that the Noteworthy Company in Amsterdam, creator of the small plastic litterbag for cars, and maker of trade show bags and trick-or-treat bags, obtained a large amount of equipment for bag manufacture from the Cohoes Carrybag Company when that Ontario Street landmark closed?

...that a group called the Unconditional Club met in Ring's Hall in Cohoes?

## WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

The Spindle City Historic Society welcomes new members *Ellen Gamache* and *Elizabeth Hutchins*.

## HISTORIAN'S NOTEBOOK

### ONTARIO AND REMSEN STREETS

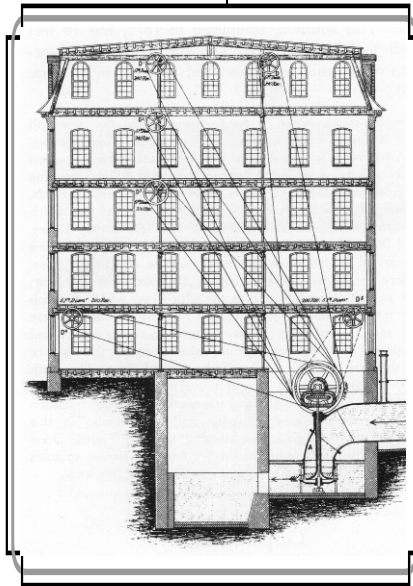
A bit of local history to visit in this newsletter are the buildings located on each corner of the intersection of Ontario and Remsen Streets. Of the four, two of them, although modified over the years, are the only buildings ever built on their lots. One is 161 years old, the other 151. Very few buildings in the Downtown Historic District, or anywhere in Cohoes, can claim that age distinction. Prior to 1847, the location that is now the intersection of Remsen and Ontario Streets was a small section of a large ravine that had for centuries channeled cascading rainwater from the hill to the Mohawk River.

The present day Salvation Army building was built in 1844 as a supplementary facility for the knitting mill of Egberts and Bailey. Here, knit goods were sewn together and prepared for shipment. Originally two and a half stories high, the building was converted to a store in 1859. The gable roof was eventually removed, with a third floor and flat roof added. The other original building at the intersection was the flouring mill of J.M. Hayward, directly north and across present Ontario Street. Built in 1854, it served the grain and feed business until 1928. The most prominent tenant of the building today is barber

Bernie Heroux. Oddly enough, the small turbine of the grist mill was found in the basement a few years back and is still there.

The remaining two buildings at the intersection, the Manufacturers Bank Building and the Kresge Building, replaced earlier structures. The Manufacturers Bank building, now the Bank of America, was built in 1906 replacing what in those days was called "the old clapboard mill". This mill, an 1846 wooden structure, was for years a knitting mill but was originally built as a machine shop for construction of the equipment for the new Ogden Mill. The last building, the Kresge Building, built in 1929 as a Five and Dime store, is the one most of us remember. Replacing an 1847 structure that was called "Granite Hall" it was the Cohoes showpiece of its day. Four stories high, with step gables, large hall on the top floor and storefronts at street level, it had a long history of important social functions and popular commercial tenants. The last owner, Dale S. Carpenter, sold the building to the Kresge Company when he opened up his floral business in new showrooms on Columbia Street.

*Walter Lipka*



## Memories of Music and Musicians in Cohoes

*By Romeo Mitri*

From the 1930s to the present, Cohoes has been blessed with many talented musicians. I will share my memories of many of them, with sincere apology to those I have missed.

Many Cohoes musicians played in and directed concert and marching bands. The Troy-based Doring Band was led by Cohoesier George Slater following Doring's death. Slater was also a saxophone baritone player. The Italian Band of Troy was led by Pat Iantono. I also played in this band, as did my father Michael Mitri. Other musicians from Cohoes in the bands were Frank Kendricks, Tommy Williams, Charlie Holden and Frank Gebosky, Sr.

Great musicians from Cohoes who met with success included the five Mastandrea (Americanized to Mastren) brothers: Carmine, Al, Eddy, John and Frank. Carmine and Al played with big bands in New York City, including the Glenn Miller and Benny Goodman bands, and made television appearances. Leo Gibeau, a great sax man, played for a long time in New York City, and then returned to this region to teach music in local schools. Metro Myresko, also a local teacher, played beautiful piano and performed with many area bands. Other Cohoes musicians of note included Roland Avalani, Julio Corona, Danny Desisto, Domenic "Cookie" Pucci, Frank Damico, Harry Taylor, Bob Walters, Richard Cunniff, Danny Desisto, jr., Reno Mencucci, T. Lanue, Dick Shannon, Pat Cappello, the Piwinica Brothers (Ted, Ed and Stan – all trumpet players, and Bill, an accordion player), Frank Marsolais and Jack Kelly.

There were many polka bands in the area because of the large Polish community. Al and John Rymanowski had a popular polka band. Cohoesiers in the band included Harry Suprenant, Stan Connery, Romeo Mitri, Pat Cappello, Ed Piwinica and Tommy Ford. Joe and Stan Kosek had a great polka band, and Pete Serek, Rube Patrician and Al Skawinski all had polka bands.

I came to know most of the City's musicians because I was president of Local 13 AFM for 16 years. I performed with the Albany Symphony, the Rymanowski Polka Band, the Al Cavelari Big Band, the Coliseum Theater orchestra, the orchestra for the Ice Capades and with many other groups. The local musicians were a close-knit group, as they saw each other frequently playing jobs in the area, including concerts, dances, weddings, and special events.



*Members of the Rymanowski Polka Band. From left to right: Thomas Ford, John Rymanowski, Al Rymanowski, Ed Piwinica.  
Photograph courtesy of Martha and Warren Fitzgerald.*

## **Father Daniel Hogan The Boxing Priest**



Father Flanagan of “Boys Town” and Father O’Malley of “Going My Way” were famed in film and print, but also of note (although far less renowned) for his support and mentoring of young people was Father Daniel D. Hogan of Cohoes. Daniel Hogan was born in Cohoes in December 1886. From an early age he excelled at athletics, and was a sports standout at Niagara University, where played basketball, baseball, and football; he boxed and competed for the track team as well. He was so skilled at baseball that Connie Mack, manager of the Philadelphia Athletics, considered him to be one of the greats of the era circa 1910. However, instead of the call to the major leagues, Hogan answered the call to the priesthood. Following his ordination in 1915, he spent six years at St. Mary’s in Glens Falls, where he also coached basketball. He then moved on in 1922 to Our Lady of Grace, a parish in Ballston Lake.

His enthusiasm for sports was shared with the boys of the parish, and he established a group, “Father Hogan’s Singing and Boxing Boys”, who toured New York State during the 1920s and 1930s. The boxers competing on the traveling teams ranged in age from eight to mid-teens; they were matched in their bouts with boxers of similar age and size. The cards typically included up to half a dozen boxing matches along with music and dance performed by young people from the parish and the region. For example, on an August

1939 evening in Stamford, New York, performers included the Hancox Brothers, who were wrestlers and also billed as the “greatest banjo act in America.” Singing and tap dancing were often featured as well.

Father Hogan helped raise additional funds for the boxers, so that boys whose families could not afford the weekly fee could attend the boxing training camps he sponsored. All boys, regardless of religious belief, were welcome in the group, but a newspaper columnist of the day did observe that “You can’t belong to the padre’s parish unless you can punch.” One of Hogan’s boxers, Joseph Santarcangelo, remembers training sessions in the basement of Our Lady of Grace, as boxers prepared for matches across the state. The team traveled in Packard cars to Buffalo, Niagara Falls, Rochester, Ogdensburg, Massena and many other places. Santarcangelo was known as Joseph Ross in his boxing days, and carried the nickname “Never Fail Joe.” A frequent opponent was Michael “Pokerface” Sarto; the two were so closely matched they traded victories over the years and by Santarcangelo’s estimation came out about even overall. During a visit to Saratoga Springs, Ross and three other boxers each held a corner of a fighter’s robe after their matches, and a supportive nightclub audience threw in a few thousand dollars in donations. Ninety percent of the receipts from matches went to the parish, and ten percent went to the boxers for shirts, shoes, and shorts. Father Hogan had the boys’ initials lettered prominently on their boxing shorts, so they felt a sense of identity and professionalism as athletes. There were also funds for the occasional treat of ice cream, which Father loved as well.

Father Hogan was remembered by his boxers as a gentleman and a man of great integrity. He was strict, encouraging discipline among the boys, which contributed to their success in his program and later in life. On June 13, 1965, Father Daniel Hogan celebrated his golden jubilee in the church, still at Our Lady of Grace. He died at the age of 80 in 1967.

*This article was adapted from a newspaper article in the Schenectady Gazette by Jeff Wilkin.*



## Off the Top...

In preparation for the celebration of my mother's eightieth birthday I sent out scrapbook pages to everyone in the family and they completed them with stories, pictures and messages and sent them back to me to assemble and present to Mom. So what does this have to do with the Spindle City Historic Society, you ask?

Well, I got to thinking. What about a scrapbook made up by members reading this newsletter? My family sent things in that were important events in our lives: weddings, showers, births and so on. They shared things that are important to them. I saw pictures of cousins I have not seen in twenty years.

What would you scrapbook about Cohoes? What events and memories are important? How would you document it, a picture, a clipping, and a first-hand account?

My challenge for you is to send us your page or pages. The format is easy: take any 8 ½ by 11 sheet of paper and let your imagination go. Include whatever you wish. We want to document Cohoes from the perspective of our membership. Was there a memorable store or shopping experience? What happened one day at work? What community event will you always remember?

Get those pages together and send them in to us at our P.O. Box. We will assemble the scrapbook. Some parts might even be presented in our newsletter. If we get enough pages submitted, we can even present it as one of our regular events by converting it into a slide show.

My family is small, only fifteen aunts, uncles and cousins in total, and mom's scrapbook is 38 pages with over 135 images. Spindle City Historic Society has over 200 members. If each member can provide one memory in words or pictures, this will be an amazing scrapbook.

As always, let's keep Cohoes' history and memories alive by sharing them with others. Isn't that our mission? Let's SCRAPBOOK it!

Paul D. Dunleavy  
President

## Canal Sign Dedication



*Mayor John McDonald, Hewitt School Principal Joanne Spencer, and SCHS President Paul Dunleavy at the sign dedication.*

On Saturday, September 17 a new interpretive sign was dedicated on North Mohawk Street. The sign, which describes how a lock works, was the result of a partnership between 5<sup>th</sup> grade students at Hewitt and Riverside Elementary Schools in Rockville Centre, NY and the Spindle City Historic Society. The students adopted canal sites in Cohoes and raised funds for their support and preservation. The money they raised, along with funds from SCHS, enabled us to design the sign. The Mayor issued a proclamation declaring the day "Hewitt and Riverside Elementary Schools Day" to honor the efforts of the students. Hewitt School principal Joanne Spencer participated in the sign dedication, and received two large-format poster copies of the sign that will be framed and hung at each of the schools.

*Congratulations and many thanks to the Hewitt and Riverside School students, principals Joanne Spencer and Patricia Bock, and teachers Joseph Paluseo and Maureen Dockery. Thanks to Mayor McDonald, Ken Radliff and the Cohoes Department of Public Works, to Christa Hay, and to the sign design team – Tor Shekerjian, Paul Dunleavy, Daniele Cherniak, with graphic designer Stefanie Lewendon.*

## "Landscapes of the Cohoes Area"

The opening reception for "Landscapes of the Cohoes Area", an exhibit of paintings by Robert Moylan, was held on September 10. Moylan's work included views of the Harmony Mills, the Cohoes Falls, and the cliffs and hills to the north and east. A graduate of Keveny Memorial Academy in Cohoes, Moylan received a B.A. in Studio Art from the College of Saint Rose and has been a full-time artist since 1993. His work has been shown in numerous one-person exhibitions

throughout the northeast, and in group exhibitions around the country. His paintings are also included in collections across the region. The show was up through October.



### Church Tour

On Saturday, October 8, SCHS sponsored a tour of churches in Cohoes. The guided bus tour included long-standing parishes and church buildings adaptively reused by new congregations or for secular purposes. Visits were made to St. Bernard's Church, Calvary Grace Church (formerly St. Patrick's Church), St. Nicholas Church, the United Church of Cohoes, First United Methodist Church, St. Joseph's Church, the First Baptist Church and St. John's Episcopal Church, now the Cohoes Public Library. At several of the churches, guides offered brief histories of the churches and described their architectural and interior features.



*Father Roman Shak at St. Nicholas Church*

*Thanks to the Cohoes Multi-Service Senior Center for providing the bus, to Christa Hay for assistance with the tour map, and to Father Lawrence McTavey at St. Bernard's, Bernie Ouimet and Lorraine DeCuyper at St. Josephs, Father Roman Shak at St. Nicholas, and Jayne Counterman at Calvary Grace for opening their churches to the tour group.*

### Region Five Fall Meeting of the APHNYS

SCHS hosted the Fall 2005 Training Conference for Region Five members of the Association of Public Historians of New York State (APHNYS) on October 29. Region Five consists of town, village, city, and county historians from Albany, Rensselaer, Saratoga, Schenectady, Warren, and Washington counties. The theme of the conference was promoting your community's history, and presentations included a history of mills in Schaghticoke, stories of women settlers in the Adirondacks, preservation initiatives in various towns around the region, and the use of GPS in mapping and locating historic sites. SCHS also had the opportunity to describe its activities and acquaint participants with the history of Cohoes. The meeting in Cohoes was very well-attended and marked the first time at such gatherings that historians from all six counties were represented.



*Meeting organizers Sharon Zankel and John Travis.*

### “Presenting Adelaide” to the Victorian Cultural League and Victorian Social Club

On November 13, SCHS hosted members of the Victorian Social Club and Victorian Cultural League for the program “Presenting Adelaide,” about Adelaide Dickey, the noted dancer and vaudeville performer who spent her early years in Cohoes. The program, presented and created by Paul Dunleavy, with technical support from Tor Shekerjian, featured exciting new information and images of Adelaide discovered in recent research. The program was accompanied by an exhibit of photographs, newspaper accounts, and memorabilia telling the story of Adelaide's life and career as a leading performer from the 1890s through the 1920s. The exhibit will be up in the Visitor's Center through January. Watch for more on Adelaide in our soon to be published book *Cohoes Revisited*.



## Labor Day 1900

When most of us think of Labor Day festivities, a backyard barbeque or a picnic come to mind. Labor Day in 1900 in Cohoes was quite another scale of celebration, when four of the city's volunteer fire companies sponsored a grand muster, inspection, and tournament. The program lasted from 10:30 a.m. well into the evening, concluding with a spectacular fireworks display. The day included a nine-division parade, contests and drills. Bands played, flags waved, and the whole town turned out in holiday attire to enjoy the event coordinated by the John McCreary Steamer Co., the Robert Johnston Steamer, the Henry L. Shaver Hose Co., and the Cascade Hose Company. John Jameson was grand marshal and chief engineer; other general officers for the event included James A. Down, Solomon Swatling, William F. Neary, Sloan M. Bice and Dolphis Turcotte. The reception committee of firemen was composed of James A. Downs, Andrew Shaufelberg, William Willett and John Green for the McCreary Co.; Markus Howarth, William Neary, Walter Wertime and Sloan M. Bice for the Johnston Steamer; Dolphis Turcotte, Senaie Turcotte, Edward Goudreau and Williman Johnson for the Shaver Hose Co.; and Solomon Swatling, William Maxwell, Adam Gillen and Jacob Mayotte for the Cascade Hose Company. The citizens' reception committee included Mayor James H. Mitchell, M.B. Redmond, Richard Bolton, Richard Ross, Charles McCullough, Thomas Kilduff, Fred W. Kavanaugh, John Spence, Henry Hinchcliffe, Michael J. Daley, Harmon Ackart and John Murray.



Chief of staff for the parade, the first event of the day, was Captain Parker G. Tymerson. The parade stepped off with the sounding of six taps on the City Hall bell. The parade route went from White Street to Mohawk and north on Mohawk to Front Street, Cataract and School Streets, back to Mohawk, south to Vliet Street, up to Willow Street, on to Strong Place, back to Vliet, on to Garner, then Johnston Ave to McElwain Ave. to High Street and back down to White St. to Remsen, Newark, Saratoga, to Mohawk and back again to

Remsen Street. Fire companies from 25 communities around the state and two from Vermont were represented.

The first division, with M.B. Redmond as marshal, included a platoon of police, the Albany City Band, the hose companies from Oneonta, Corinth, and Bennington, and a hose company from Rondout accompanied by their Mayor, city council and 40 honorary members. The second division was headed by F.W. Kavanaugh, with Rupp's band and hose companies from Newburgh, Johnstown, Kinderhook, Fort Edward and Herkimer. Richard Bolton was marshal of the third division, with the Robertson Military Band, a drum corps, and fire companies for Rensselaer, Scotia, Schaghticoke and Watervliet. The fourth division, headed by Antoine Dussault and a band, included hose companies from Hudson, Watervliet and Waterford. Henry L. Shaver was marshal for the fifth division, with the Cohoes Cadet Band and hose companies from Waterford, Mechanicville, and Stillwater. The sixth division had Michael Daley as marshal with hose companies from Troy, Lansingburgh, Green Island, Greenwich and Schuylerville. Leading the seventh division was Michael T. Smith and Green's Cohoes City Band, followed by the Uniformed Rank of AOH Division No. 8, Amulet Association of Jackspinners, the Cohoes Painters' Union and the United Brotherhood of Carpenters. Marshal for the eighth division was David S. Johnston, with the Hoosick Falls band and sponsoring Cohoes units. The ninth and last division included the Cohoes Fire Department and eleven pieces of apparatus.

This was an impressive parade, the likes of which was rarely seen by Cohoesiers. The day's celebration was surely enhanced by the offerings of the city's eating and drinking establishments, as advertised in a souvenir program produced for the muster and associated events. Bessette's Chop House, located at 63 1/2 Mohawk St. advertised fish, lobster, chicken, oysters and clams, along with Anheuser-Busch lager, in its restaurant equipped with electric fans and a summer garden. Not to be outdone, the G.H. Krause Café at Remsen and Howard called itself the "coolest place in the city." John B. Nelligan's place at 91 Main advertised "lager always cool and fresh," and a free lunch "that will save you the price of a dinner or supper." Michael T. Smith's 11 Willow St. establishment featured "cool lager in large glasses" and the finest brands of liquor and cigars. Whalen's Café at 58 Mohawk also offered fine liquor and cigars and claimed the "finest lunch in the city." Thomas E. Reed, at 63 Canvass St., offered beverages "for family use", as did John Hay at 3 St. John Street, who bottled the city-brewed Penrose and McEniry ale. The John T. Higgins Café at 70 Oneida St. carried Milwaukee beer, and "a fine lot of bottled liquors, California port and sherry wine at \$1 per gallon."

After recovering from the holiday, Cohoesiers would have the opportunity to patronize other businesses represented in the souvenir program, including the Mechanics' Savings Bank, at 76 Oneida St., which advertised an interest rate of 3 1/2 percent on deposits (ah, the good old days!) and loans at 5 percent. H.G. Calkins was selling school supplies at 2 Adams Block, and J.H. Smith, at 268 Ontario Street, just across from City Hall, sold toys, notions, and novelties, as well as rubber collars and cuffs. R.W. Smith, at 188 Remsen, featured bicycles starting at \$5.00. W.W. Snyder operated a carriage and harness repository at 45 Oneida St., and R.H. Mott & Brothers sold Red Cross stoves and furniture of all sorts just up the street at 72 Oneida. Both M. McDermott and P.H. Spillane were in business as druggists, with McDermott's advertising the "best ice cream soda." M.F. Delahunt listed a variety of victuals, including home-baked beans at 9 cents for three pounds. Other grocers included Daniel O'Neil at 75 Vliet, T.J. O'Neil at Mohawk and Oneida, John N. Blais, at 30 Sargent St., Halls, at 82 Remsen, Zelie and Slade at 245 Remsen and W.G. Tessier at 84 Vliet. Cohoes was indeed a lively place on this Labor Day on the threshold of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

*Much of the material for this article was gathered from a series of 1949 newspaper articles by John F. Dillon.*

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## ***Spindle City Historic Society Membership Application***

[www.timesunion.com/communities/spindlecity](http://www.timesunion.com/communities/spindlecity)

[www.spindlecity.org](http://www.spindlecity.org)

President - Paul Dunleavy

First Vice President - Daniele Cherniak    Second Vice President - Tor Shekerjian

Secretary - Linda C. Christopher                      Treasurer - June Cherniak

<input type="checkbox"/> Individual Membership	\$10.00	<input type="checkbox"/> Institutional Membership	\$25.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Senior Citizen Membership	\$ 5.00	<input type="checkbox"/> Contributing Membership	\$35.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Student Membership	\$ 5.00	<input type="checkbox"/> Sustaining Membership	\$50.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Family Membership	\$15.00		

*We have great things planned in our home in the Cohoes Visitor's Center!*

*Please help if you can with an additional donation to support our upcoming programs:*

\$5.00     \$10.00     other

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP CODE \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Mail completed form with membership fee, payable to Spindle City Historic Society, to:  
June Cherniak, Treasurer, 415 Vliet Boulevard, Cohoes, NY 12047

## ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPCOMING EVENTS

***Cohoes Revisited*** - The Spindle City Historic Society's second book, *Cohoes Revisited*, will be published in early 2006. Reserve your copy now by contacting us. The book also makes a great gift. Although the book will not be released by the holidays, SCHS is offering gift certificates that can be redeemed when the book arrives in January. We can also arrange for mailing of books (for an additional charge) for those who cannot pick them up. And remember, if books are purchased directly from SCHS, our organization retains over 40% of the cover price to support exhibits, programming, and other activities, as well as this newsletter. If you'd like to reserve copies of the book or purchase gift certificates, please call us at 518-237-5618 or e-mail us at [cherniak@nycap.rr.com](mailto:cherniak@nycap.rr.com).



*Congratulations to Terry Page, the winner of the SCHS annual raffle.*



*Thanks to Dunkin' Donuts of Cohoes and store manager John Weido for donating coffee and donuts to SCHS for the Region Five meeting of Public Historians of NYS.*



***Wednesday, January 25*** - Spindle City Historic Society meeting. 7 p.m., Cohoes Visitor's Center.  
***Wednesday, February 22*** - Spindle City Historic Society meeting. 7 p.m., Cohoes Visitor's Center.  
***Wednesday, March 29*** - Spindle City Historic Society meeting. 7 p.m., Cohoes Visitor's Center.  
***Wednesday, April 26*** - Spindle City Historic Society meeting. 7 p.m., Cohoes Visitor's Center.

*Photo credits this issue: Walter Cherniak, Tom Donnelly, Paul Dunleavy, Tor Shekerjian*

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Spindle City Historic Society

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